5 Tips When You Have 5 Minutes With A Prospect

By Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE

If you are on the phone, a webinar, or in person, and you have a few minutes with the executive, what do you say to keep on track and be professional? Here is an invaluable framework. Adapt it to your situation, and boost your confidence and credibility.

Imagine that you have a satisfied client company for one of your offerings. You feel now is the best time to discuss your next and higher investment offering. The team, your main contact, is ready to view a product demonstration set for the next day. All your demos are delivered in a webinar. At 2 P.M. you get a call from your main contact who says "Great news! Tomorrow our boss, who is the real decision-maker, is going to be in our office. Rather than just showing our team what you have to offer, the boss said he would like to sit in on the first five minutes. I know you will do well."

Don't panic. This is a great opportunity, and once you make a positive impact, the sales cycle is going to be cut short. You will not have to hear, "We love this, but now we have to convince our boss." This is, however, now your number one priority to prepare. You may be seasoned, but take this seriously. Your sales manager is always telling you, "Sell to the C Suite." This is your chance. Remember these five simple suggestions for sales success.

1. **Build rapport before you speak.** It is easier to connect if you can make eye contact with the client, so turn on your webcam to welcome everyone and then again when you answer questions. Although many professionals say they are not comfortable doing this, it has many benefits. Who can resist your friendly smile? You will look more confident, and it is tougher to say no when they are looking at you.

2. **Be prepared, and get to the point.** Remember, with an executive you need to be clear, concise, credible, and able to articulate the bottom line of your message. The higher up the corporate ladder you go, the more quickly you need to get to the point and demonstrate value. As counterintuitive as it may seem, the less time you have in which to present your case, the longer you will need to prepare. You may have friendly chatter with the team before you get to business, but in this case every second counts. Be polite, respectful, and get to the point fast.

3. **Remember you are not alone.** Speak on behalf of your leadership. This way you can feel you are making a connection with the position, even when you are not holding that position yourself. You will discover that this technique adds to your confidence.

4. **Remind the executive they have already made a wise decision by doing business with your company.** Remind them that they have already researched your company and that they were comfortable enough to make you a vendor of choice. This is just a logical next step.

5. **Make heroes of the team you are working with.** These are your internal champions, and although they may not make the ultimate decision, they certainly have influence and can sabotage your sale. Your job is to work closely with the team or champion who will give you information. Do your research so that you are on target with your questions about their company and the approach the executive will most likely respond to.

When you have to deliver an executive overview, be clear and concise and sound credible. When you adapt this framework to your situation, you will get results.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith. On behalf of our leadership and my team, thank you for your business. As you know, we are committed to delivering the best service for our valued clients like you.

On a personal note, working with John and Mary is a delight. They are both helpful and incredibly efficient.

The purpose of this call is to deliver a high-level overview of our product that you have invested in, review your results compared to your expectations, and then introduce you to three other ways in which we can be of service.

Once we have proven the power of (our product), most of our clients find it logical to add ________ and ______ to their package.

John suggested you are most interest in seeing . . .

Mary mentioned you have ambitious goals for next year to . . .

That is an area in which we could be very advantageous to you.

My understanding is that we have four more minutes. Is that correct?

Let me roll up my sleeves, and you just sit back, watch the demo, and be amazed.

Please feel free to interject at any time.

Do you like what you saw?

Then our next logical step is to continue the conversation with John and Mary and prepare a draft proposal for your review.

Does that make sense to you?

Moving forward, is there any other area you would like for us to pursue?

Again, thank you for your business and the opportunity to demonstrate how we can continue to streamline your company."

Can you see the five suggestions in this simple outline?

Again, I recommend you turn on the webcam when you open and close the conversation. This makes it easier to make an emotional connection.

Because you are on a webinar, you can have your opening script and outline printed.

Once you internalize your new, tightened script, it will become second nature.

Make sure you smile. Your client will hear it in your voice.

Companies who want a competitive edge hire Patricia Fripp. She is a Hall of Fame keynote speaker, executive speech coach, sales presentation skills and on-line training expert. Patricia is also a subject matter expert for Continuing Education at XTRACredits. When your message must be memorable, your presentation powerful, and your sales successful in-person or online Patricia Fripp can help.

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